

ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING  
QUARTERLY MEETING: September 24, 2021  
Virtual

Members Present: Michelle Paonessa, Chair, Russ Goddard, Vice Chair, Kay Tyberg, Alex Van Hook, Lori Leiman, Janette Fulton, Trisha Mader, Kallie Mendenhall, Becky Lorah

ODHH Staff: Melissa Hawkins, Director, DeeDee Keiser, Ben Moonan, Denise Brown

Interpreters: Cindi Brown, Jessica Bentley - Sassamon

CART: Debbie Cunningham

Moderator: Nichole Wade

**Review and Approval of Minutes:**

The March 19, 2021 meeting minutes were reviewed. Russ Goddard made a motion to pass. Kay Tyberg seconded. Minutes were approved.

**Committee Updates:**

Early Intervention Sub Committee - No members were present, so Russ spoke on what direction the group needed to take. He reminded everyone that the Pandemic has affected many things and decisions on priorities for the group were needed.

Aging Sub Committee - Kay and Becky had put together a very lengthy list of issues. At the top of the list was communication and stigma being large concerns. Communication tied into almost all the items Kay outlined. From seating in meetings, doctor's offices and accommodations, Kay and Becky put together a very comprehensive list on issues for those 65 plus.

## **Department Reports:**

Aging - The Department is working on enrollment merges for the PACE program. The department is also working to make edits to the PACE application.

Human Services – An accessibility page is now available to ensure that all digital content services on the Department of Human Services website is accessible to everyone. This page allows users to notify the department if they come across an area of the website, a document, or any other material that's not accessible to them. It also allows the users to request materials in specific formats.

Labor and Industry – The Department of Labor & Industry includes the office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Office of Unemployment Compensation. Labor and Industry is still open for business. The office is moving a little bit towards a hybrid environment in terms of the staff. Some of the staff is working out of the offices and some will be teleworking from home. As of July 1, of this year, Labor and Industry has ended the order of selection waiting list. They are still limiting services to those with the most severe disabilities as defined by the Vocational Rehabilitation staff.

ODHH - The past couple of weeks there have been multiple disaster recovery centers opened. The Department of Labor & Industry has been activated in all those centers in Montgomery, Bucks, and Chester counties. ODHH helps secure interpreters and makes sure captioning is available on devices. If anybody comes in, regardless of whether they need assistance with unemployment, flooding or housing, they have accessibility at these recovery centers. Right now, we have 620 state registered interpreters and 47 provisional. ODHH is planning the 2022 hearing loss expo for the fall of 2022. More information will be coming.

## **Public Comment:**

Nancy Kigsley – Gave comments on the work with the Department of Corrections. She suggested ODHH work with Disability Rights PA on the issues.

Jess Adams, Deafstone -They are serving the western side of state SSP services but are in bid for the Eastern side as well. Deafstone does services for older population and will connect with Kay and Becky.

Karen Leslie– She asked where to send resources and stated she had planned to ask about Hearing Loss Expo.

Marsha Drenth – She wanted to let everyone know that she was not getting SSP services, nor were many other people.

## **OVR Update- Jeremiah Underhill**

OVR is wrapping up the federal fiscal year right now with only a couple of business days left in the current federal fiscal year. They are actively working to wind down some of the end of year projects and prepare fiscal materials for reporting. He reported a good thing is that OVR is going into the new federal fiscal year on sound and financial footing and will be able to put forth lofty goals.

Russ made a motion to close the meeting. Trish seconded.

Meeting was adjourned.

Next Council Meeting is December 3, 2021.